



2008 California Asian Pacific Islander Policy Summit

LEGISLATIVE AND BUDGET AGENDA

LEGISLATION

Civil Rights

AB 2762 (Eng) – Larry’s Law

Over the last few years, California has experienced an alarming increase in bias-motivated incidents in public schools. One egregious incident includes the tragic murder of LGBT teenager, Lawrence King, at E.O. Green Junior High School in Oxnard, California. To prevent such hate based violence, this bill will require schools to establish a protocol for reporting threats of violence that are made between students. In addition, the bill establishes a pilot project grant program to help integrate inter-group relations in the existing curriculum.

Health

AB 158 (Ma) – Medi-Cal Benefits for Individuals with Chronic Hepatitis B

AB 158 requires the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to expand eligibility for Medi-Cal benefits to individuals with chronic hepatitis B. Chronic hepatitis B affects nearly 280,000 Californians and is the leading cause for liver cancer and liver transplant in California. Communities of color are disproportionately affected especially Asian/Pacific Islanders (APIs), African Americans and Latinos. In the API community, Chinese Americans have a three to four times higher risk for liver cancer caused by chronic hepatitis B than Caucasian Americans, and Vietnamese Americans have a seven to eight times higher risk for liver cancer caused by chronic hepatitis B. Chronic hepatitis B-related liver cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among API men living in California.

AB 2298 (Hayashi) – Community Benefits: Reducing Health Disparities

This bill would require non-profit hospitals to dedicate a minimum of 50 percent of their community benefits activities, programs, or grants toward projects that focus on eliminating health disparities, as prescribed in the Healthy People 2010 report. AB 2298 would not affect the money currently devoted to charity care, Medi-Care, or Medi-Cal shortfall.

Language Access

AB 1930 (Torrico) – Disaster Preparedness

This bill will bring great focus and attention to the needs of LEP individuals in emergency preparedness planning. This bill would develop a state plan to meet the needs of LEP individuals during a disaster, including developing criteria for local agency plans and developing technologies and information systems to assist in the evacuation of LEP individuals.

SB 1523 (Kuehl) – Equal Access to Justice System

This bill will promote equal access to the justice system for battered women with limited English proficiency. It will allow the Victims Compensation and Government Claims Board to reimburse LEP crime victims for the expenses of language interpreter services that are incurred during the law enforcement investigation or provision of medical services. It will require law enforcement agencies to adopt procedures and techniques for ensuring timely, effective, and accurate communication with LEP persons at the scene of a domestic violence incident, and to include procedures and techniques for addressing language needs as part of law enforcement training curriculum.

AB 3050 (Jones) – Court Interpreters

This bill establishes a pilot project for providing interpreters in civil courts. Civil courts govern critical cases affecting Californians such as child custody, child support, housing, and consumer protections, and meaningful access to justice can only be achieved when interpreters are provided for limited English proficient individuals.

AB 2586 (Torrico) – Renter foreclosure rights

This bill will aid thousands of renters throughout the state who may lose their residences due to foreclosures. It requires that the tenants, in these situations, must be given 60 days' notice before they can be required to vacate these premises; thereby giving tenants enough time to find new housing. These notices must be provided in plain language as well as translated into the top five languages other than English spoken by Californians so that renters will be able to understand the impact of the foreclosure on their housing situation. In addition, the bill also clarifies protections for tenants to be able to receive their security deposit.

BUDGET ITEMS

California Civil Liberties Public Education Program

The Administration has proposed a ten percent reduction of \$50,000 to California Civil Liberties Public Education program. The California Civil Liberties Public Education Program, a highly successful program administered by the California State Library, was designed as a result of a lack of education in public schools regarding the Japanese American internment experience. In 2003, the program was reduced from \$1 million to \$500,000 due to the state's budget deficit.

Acupuncture: Medi-Cal Optional Benefit

The Administration has proposed to eliminate the Acupuncture Optional Medi-Cal benefit for general fund savings of \$2.84 million in 2008-2009. It also results in an equal loss of \$2.84 million in federal matching funds. The Administration is also proposing to eliminate a total of 10 optional benefits for 2008-09 savings of \$134 million. While the federal government considers acupuncture an optional part of the Medi-Care system, in many parts of the API community acupuncture is a mainstay of medical care. Many members of our community turn to acupuncture as their first line of medical treatment, eliminating this optional benefit would deprive them of care.

California Food Assistance Program (CFAP)

The Administration has proposed a ten percent reduction to the California Food Assistance Program. It reduces the average monthly benefit for a recipient in the program from approximately \$91 to \$82, resulting in savings of \$2.5 million general fund in the budget year. CFAP provides food coupons to legal immigrants that fail to qualify for federal Food Stamps solely because of their citizenship. The reduction affects 23,400 people served by the program.

Naturalization Services Program (NSP)

The Administration has proposed a ten percent reduction of \$300,000 to the \$3 million Naturalization Services Program. The Naturalization Services Program provides services to assist legal permanent residents obtain citizenship through a network of community non-profits throughout the state. For about \$350 per client, NSP provides training and support to individuals obtaining their citizenship.

Department of Fair Employment & Housing

The Administration has proposed a ten percent reduction of \$1.8 million and 17.2 positions for the Department of Fair Employment and Housing, the only state agency charged with handling complaints of employment, housing, and hate crimes. The threatened budget cut will also compound the harm to Californians resulting from budget cuts earlier this decade. Not only were field offices closed down, like those in San Bernardino County and Ventura County, numerous complaint investigations now take much longer than 100 days to complete, a time period that is statutorily mandated. A further reduction of \$1.8 million to this already under-funded agency, will result in negative consequences in our state's ability to handle complaints of employment, housing, and hate crimes. In addition, a cut of \$117,000 is proposed for the Fair Employment & Housing Commission, which will reduce the number of hearings held by the Commission.

State Personnel Board

The Administration has proposed a reduction of \$166,000 (including one staff position) for the State Personnel Board to monitor agencies' implementation of the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act. The Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act requires state and local agencies to provide meaningful access for limited English proficient individuals to government services. The funding reduction will further hamper the agency's ability to adequately review and monitor agencies to ensure linguistic accessibility for all Californians.